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FOREWORD

I AM interested in this book for two reasons. The first is that the 114
authors are my nephew and his wife—both devoted anthropologists, to whom this painstaking research into the least known of our South African native tribes has been a real labour of love. While earth's foundations were shaking in the convulsion of our times they were absorbedly probing into the mysteries of the Rain-Queen and her 'timeless' society. To me this seemed an almost unnatural devotion to science—until I came to read the MS. of this book and found it a fascinating distraction to the war problems which form my daily life. Perhaps the curious reader may find it no less entertaining.

The second reason is that for at least half a century the Rain-Queen 643
and her people and the curious stories about them have interested me. She was said to be very light coloured: was she a descendant of one of a couple of Boer girls who were said to have been spared by those natives, when early in the nineteenth century they massacred the Van Rensburg party without leaving a trace behind? What was the mystery about her which made it almost impossible for Europeans to catch a glimpse of her? Had the Natives adopted a white queen as something divine? Even if these were mere baseless fancies, other points of personal interest attracted me to the subject of the queen. Long ago one of my daughters, when a college girl, visited the country of the queen with a company of friends in the hope that they might be able to see her. In that mountainous, almost roadless country the party was overtaken by a violent rainstorm and late at night arrived at her headquarters drenched, exhausted, and more dead than alive. The queen ordered a hut to be cleaned and prepared for them where they stayed the night; and next day, having probably heard that she was the Prime Minister's daughter, gave a personal audience to her. Imagine the thrill! That established a personal bond between the queen and my wife, suitably recognized in the customary South African way. Then many years after, my nephew and his wife were staying at the headquarters of the queen in order to gather the material for this book. From time to time they informed me of the most interesting anthropological finds they were making. I also learnt that near her headquarters was a forest of cycads (*Encephalartos transvenosus Burtt-Davy*), one of the most unique botanical features in South Africa. [137]
This decided me at last to spend a holiday in the queen's country, and, with my relatives as guides, I had a most interesting experience. I saw how they had, through simple humanness, overcome the fears and the shyness of the people and were on most familiar terms both with the queen and her subjects. I saw my cycad forest. Best of all, I saw that wonderful woman, well over sixty, but strong in body and character—every inch a queen. We exchanged information and gifts in the traditional style, and I could thank her for her kindness to my daughter in the distant past. She was much taken up with all the useful domestic articles my wife had sent her. A couple of years afterwards I was once

J [i.e. J.C. Smuts--Analyst]

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643 more Prime Minister, and I received a most charming letter from her, expressing her pleasure that she had met and personally knew the man who was 'wearing the crown of South Africa'. Accepting the complimentary expression so kindly meant, I was equally pleased to have met a woman who so impressed me with her force of character and intangible air of authority—a woman who really was a queen. No wonder her subjects look upon her as the embodiment of their divine order. And yet that woman is the centre—in the ritual of her tribe—of a great tragedy which awaits her, as it has awaited her predecessors. That ritual carries us back to the most dim and distant past of the human race, and the interested reader will find it in this book. Mujaji is one of the high lights of anthropology, and, looking at her calm, strong face, I wondered what she thought of the fate in store for her. Here are the tears in things mortal.

● 114 This book is interesting from another point of view. It paints the picture of a Native society in which the pattern or plan of the whole determines the character of all the main lines of detail. Religion, law, ethics, social institutions, all fit naturally and almost logically into the scheme as a whole—they appear to be products of the central pattern which has stamped its character on all the details. The social sanctions in law, religion, ethics, &c., are not external and superimposed on the social practice, but flow from the fundamental social system itself as its natural outcome. All are in one degree or another internal to the system. The writers of this study have succeeded in penetrating to this inner core of this particular type of Native society, and in showing the balance and harmony of the system as a whole. This gives, in my opinion, a very special anthropological value to this study.

They have no doubt been able to probe thus deeply into this Native society because of the sympathetic relations they have been able to establish with the Natives. The first task of the anthropological field-worker, that of gaining the confidence of the Native, is more difficult than is generally supposed. As those who know the Native mind realize, it requires qualities of tact, patience, and sympathy of the highest order. This task presents unusual difficulties among the people of Mujaji, whose suave and accommodating manners can be most effectively used to frustrate the quest of the field-worker. And if there is one thing about which they are persistent, it is the safeguarding of their secrets. The tenacity with which they keep these secrets is intelligible, for they attach as great importance to the mystery supporting the powers of their queen as an army commander to the strategy which will ensure the success of his campaign. The queen is rain-maker *par excellence* of South Africa, and to maintain that position her secret weapon must never be divulged. Moreover, intimately linked with the preservation of her powers are many of the constituent parts of the whole tribal structure. All the major institutional arrangements in some way subserve the grand purpose of making her the divine 'transformer of the clouds'. Since the foundations as well as the superstructure of the culture are interlocked with this purpose and are psychologically necessary, as the authors show, for sustaining men's faith in the Rain-Queen's role, investigations even into

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the most everyday occurrences arouse suspicion and are met with evasions. In these circumstances, penetration into the innermost life and values in the society is an outstanding achievement. The acid test of the investigator's understanding of the primitive people he studies is whether or not he makes sense of what appears to the ordinary observer as a mass of vices, follies, and superstitions. That is the test that the authors have satisfied. In this book, customs and an outlook so different from ours as to be regarded from our point of view as irrational and perverted emerge as perfectly natural and coherent—nay, inevitable in the total context of the culture.

Another reason for ranking this book high among monographs on the Bantu is that it deals with a people whose ethnic affinities give them an important place in future comparative studies. They occupy a country which has been subjected to influences emanating from three major clusters of the Southern Bantu: the Sotho of the central plateau, the Nguni of the south-east coastal regions, and the Shona to the north of the Limpopo. Migrating southward some centuries ago from the disrupted empire of Monomotapa, the land of our enigmatic Zimbabwe ruins, they have absorbed into their original culture many diverse elements from tribes in the south. The composite nature of their culture, which has none the less been welded into a remarkably coherent whole, and the feasibility of studying the character of its constitutional parts in other tribes are of great significance for the comparative study of tribal institutions. I believe that the time has arrived for such a study, at least of those sections of the Bantu of whom we have some considerable knowledge. In a limited sphere, that of the tribes of the Northern Transvaal, the authors, who have tested the value of comparative field-work, point out the perspective they have gained from this method and the clues for interpreting custom that it has given them.

Of the specific contributions in this book to our knowledge of Bantu custom and thought, I need refer merely to a few. The authors are concerned mainly with presenting a balanced analysis of the great dynamic forces in the social system, of the mentality and outlook of the people, and of the tendencies due to culture contact. It is therefore all the more significant that they have found room to emphasize the place in the lives of the people of the practical, everyday business of making a living. Not even a primitive people, however magic-ridden their culture, can afford to give less time and energy to provide for their material needs than to what we call their superstitions. What must strike every reader is the extent of their knowledge and use of the vegetation. We ought to know more of these things in Bantu life, not merely because of their intrinsic interest and the light they throw upon how far empirical relations are recognized by primitive peoples, but also it is upon knowledge of this kind that we can most profitably graft our own scientific conceptions, our measures for their material progress. This is not to say that we should not also know their philosophy of life, for fundamental values cannot be disregarded in the handling of human situations. But it is clear that the vast, only slightly explored field of the Native's knowledge of plants, their properties and uses, awaits intensive investigation. The authors are

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● 114 justified in their admiration for the Native's knowledge of the vegetation. Recent chemical analysis of several Native relishes shows that their protective and nutritional value is not inferior to that of our vegetables and greens. We know very little of the therapeutic value of roots and barks used in Native medicine, but, since close observation of nature and a real capacity for understanding empirical relations is evident in all their practical activities, there is ample justification for research in these matters, even though Native medicine is largely dominated by magical conceptions.

In the complex of social institutions, women have an unusually exalted position, higher even than among the Venda. It is evident that the claims of women to achievement are given special recognition. The maintenance of their status in a patrilineal society is not merely a survival; it is closely connected with the distinctive pattern imparted to the culture by a queen, who, besides being the religious head, is the nucleus of a network of political alliances. Social links in the society have ingeniously been co-ordinated with its predominant pattern. The special link between brother and sister has, for instance, been coupled to the chain of the bride-price cattle exchanges, and in the result a web of influences radiates from the sister to the various parts of the social system. Women thus become the nucleus of a system which holds together the intermarrying groups, the district organizations and, to a large extent, the whole political structure. It is not to be expected that this power of women, in a society which accords legal precedence to men, will always go unchallenged. For that reason, among others, many conflicts as regards succession to important positions and other institutional stresses and strains arise.

The method of settling differences is discussed in an illuminating chapter appropriately headed 'The Genius of Juridical Adjustments'. This chapter throws new light upon, just as it makes an outstanding contribution to, Bantu jurisprudence. Law emerges as an extremely flexible body of rules, enforced chiefly by the complex interconnexions within the institutions of which they form part and administered by a body of men concerned not so much with the superficial issues presented by the parties as with the fundamental causes of friction between them. As contrasted with our legal system, in which law decides between issues, their method is to reconcile persons. The arbitrational machinery in the service of their system ramifies through the whole society. Like the genius of the complex royal institutions, its genius is directed towards appeasement and the maintenance of a well-balanced equilibrium. The emphasis upon these things, coupled with other arrangements in the society, has brought about a system which functions without involving, or at least without relying for its validity upon, sanctions of physical force. The effective sanctions are to be found in the interplay of a network of reciprocal rights and obligations: if the reciprocities are respected life is worth living, if they are neglected life is difficult, often impossible.

Besides these contributions to the working of the society, the book contains a series of chapters on the philosophy of life of the people and their mentality. They do not, of course, speculate about final causes, but

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their conceptions of the causation of disease and death—the great evils they recognize—and of the interrelations of the worlds of natural and supernatural forces provide evidence of their outlook upon final causes. It is an outlook very different from our own, but nevertheless coherent. If we start from their premisses and the small measure of control they have over the forces of nature, we may come to conclusions not unlike theirs. Their conclusions are, in other words, neither absurd nor the inferences of irrational beings with minds operating differently from ours. This difference in outlook upon final causes is found also in the sphere of what we may call 'moral qualities', such as honesty, industry, moderation. It is in this sphere, as the authors show, that grave misunderstandings are liable to arise between Europeans and Natives in their practical relations with one another. In the timeless society of the Native the need there is among us for intensive striving, precision, and punctuality does not exist; and as a result friction is liable to arise in the employment situation. This is but one of the many instances in which incongruities in the two cultures may cause conflicts when they are brought into contact with one another. The merit of the discussion of this subject lies both in that Lovedu traits and attitudes are shown to be inevitable consequences of the cultural pattern and in the appreciation of the reality of the difficulties encountered by the European in the contact situation. This is the kind of realism that will go far towards making the conclusions of social anthropology more acceptable to practical men and more useful to the administrator.

These are only a few of the many interesting and remarkable features of this study. Other readers may be attracted by other features in it. I commend the book as a whole as one of the most honest and penetrating researches into Native life that I have come across. And I am aware of the hard work and loving care that have gone to the making of it.

J. C. SMUTS.

CAPETOWN.
March, 1941.

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principles, but eschewed the details. Upon a limited canvas we have striven to draw the main outlines in such a way as both to maintain the proportions of the culture and to interest the general reader as well as the student. Much is left unsaid about such aspects of the culture as the manner in which men try to harness the powers of nature and to condition the individual to his social function, the basic assumptions of the magico-religious world and the elements imparted to the culture by contact with other peoples, both African and European. We have not touched upon many aspects usually dealt with in the larger anthropological monographs. In view of our general object, we have omitted not only whole subjects of interest to the anthropologist, such as birth and death ceremonial, arts and crafts, village organization and kinship terminology, but also details on practices of importance to specialists, such as care of cattle, cultivation, diet and diseases, land tenure and medicine. While we believe that the many omissions do not detract from the essential balance and unity of the whole, it is our intention to fill in the gaps with articles on specialized aspects of the culture, and with additional books on larger topics such as law and judicial arrangements, marriage and social organization, magic, and religion. Too much must not be expected in the present volume.

Our contacts with the Lovedu began more than ten years ago with short visits of a month each in 1928, 1930, and 1932. These visits served as an introduction, but sustained field investigation was rendered possible only when, between 1936 and 1938, we held a Fellowship of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures. During this period we were in the field sixteen and a half months in all: April to July, 1936, November, 1936, to July, 1937, September and October, 1937, and May to August, 1938. In some of the intervening periods, while one of us was ill, the other as far as possible maintained personal touch with the Lovedu and, in order to verify some of our observations and to investigate a ceremony not held since 1905, we also paid some visits of a few days each in 1939.

Except to mention two points, we shall refrain from expounding our methods of investigation. The principles we adopted were, on the one hand, personal and intensive local observation, and, on the other, comparative investigation over a large area. Personal observation is essential because, though verbal accounts given by reliable informants may serve as useful starting-points, they generally not only are unconsciously idealized, but assume a background unknown to the investigator and often entirely escaping his attention. Accounts may reflect theory and ideals, but often give a very wrong impression of practice and real life; they never convey atmosphere and personal relationships. By comparative study, we obtained a mass of valuable clues as to lines of inquiry or interpretation which we could follow up and check by further local and intensive as well as extensive observation.

Personal observation is tiring, slow to yield results, and usually objectionable to the Lovedu; but in the end the rewards are great. After a long day's work, it is distasteful, but often essential, to keep awake all night sitting in the stifling atmosphere of a hut crowded with dancing,

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PROPERTY, CROSS-COUSIN MARRIAGE, AND THE FAMILY CYCLE AMONG THE LOBEDU[1]

Eileen Jensen Krige

THE Lobedu are a South Bantu people characterized by the institution of 'divine kingship'. They live in a mountainous area of the North-eastern Transvaal lowveld. Originally from *Bokhalaga* (S. Rhodesia), they migrated south when the empire of Monomotapa broke up and established themselves as rulers over the sparse Sotho population they found in occupation. The rain-making powers of their queen, enhanced by the mystery and secrecy of her ritual seclusion, attracted many accretions from diverse tribal groups from surrounding areas who sought security and peace particularly during the period of unrest following the wars of Shaka, the Zulu, and the raids of Matabele and Swazi. For enemies feared to attack the Lobedu queen lest they be visited by drought and locusts. The descendants of the Lobedu proper therefore form only a small portion of the total population which, however, except for relatively recent Tsonga immigrants from Portuguese East Africa, is remarkably homogeneous in culture. The Lobedu had no military traditions and built up their kingdom by peaceful means.

The form of government is that of a central authority with the queen as the head of state and spatially defined political

[1]The field-work on which this essay is based was carried out jointly with my husband, the late J. D. Krige, under the auspices of the International African Institute in 1936–8, and was supplemented and brought up to date by short field trips in 1961 and 1962.

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see. But the fruits of her labour go to swell the property only of that unit of the lineage which constitutes the wife's own 'house', the independence and rights of which must be respected even by the husband.

Bride-price generally consists of some five to eight head of cattle, a number of goats and money (to the extent of at least £5). Today people sometimes pay a sum of money instead of cattle—£40 in a recent marriage. This represents eight head of cattle, bride-price cattle having been regarded as equivalent to £5 each, irrespectively of market prices, for the past fifty years at least. The amount given is, however, never a fixed one as the passing of bride-price initiates a continuous relationship of gift exchange between the two families concerned and the marriage puts the bridegroom under a lifelong obligation to extend economic help to his wife's people. '*Monoalo a o fede*—bride-price is never completed', it is said. When the wife's people have to pay a fine, if they need cattle or goats for the marriage of a son, they will approach their *tsetse* (or *muduhulu*)—son-in-law. The man who has provided a wife has given something 'bigger than cattle' and is in this sense in a superior position. On the other hand the son-in-law (*muduhulu*) or wife-receiver is accorded great honour by his wife's people and once a year at least receives a gift of beer and grain. The relationship is one of reciprocity and the son-in-law must for his part also show respect for his wife's people. He must ever be ready to grant their requests and may never refuse. There is no evidence for Leach's suggestion that the Lobedu have a 'kind of Kachin structure in reverse' with a 'strong tendency for the wife-receiving group to rank the higher'.[1] In endogamous unions in the Lobedu royal group both husband and wife may be members of the same lineage. Lobedu society is, moreover, not a stratified society though the royal lineage enjoys great prestige.

Fully to understand Lobedu marriage one must approach it also from the point of view of the woman. Usually a uterine brother marries a wife with the cattle that have accrued from his sister's marriage. This sometimes happens in other tribes too. But where the Lobedu situation seems to be distinctive is that every woman whose marriage-cattle have been used to

[1] Leach, 1951.